

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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DRAFTED BY NEA:ARDAY:TH

APPROVED BY M:LSEAGLEBURGER

NEA:ADUBS

S/S:MR. BRIDGES

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O 011809Z SEP 76 ZFF5

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

INFO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 216855 TOSEC 250032

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI HARASSMENT OF AMOCO IN THE GULF OF SUEZ

1. EAGLEBURGER CALLED DINITZ THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 1 AND REVIEWED WITH HIM THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE PREVIOUS EVENING. HE POINTED OUT IN PARTICULAR THAT WHILE WE WERE BEING ASSURED BY THE ISRAELIS BOTH HERE AND IN ISRAEL THAT THERE WAS NO ULTIMATUM INVOLVED, THE CAPTAIN OF THE ISRAELI GUNBOAT, ACCORDING TO OUR REPORTS FROM CAIRO, WAS TELLING THE AMOCO DRILLING RIG COMMANDER THAT HE HAD ONLY AN HOUR TO LEAVE THE AREA. THE DRILLING RIG COMMANDER, ON HIS OWN AUTHORITY AND IN THE FACE OF THIS ISRAELI PRESSURE, REMOVED THE RIG FROM THE SITE.

2. EAGLEBURGER TOLD DINITZ THAT THE SECRETARY WANTED TO LODGE A QUOTE STIFF PROTEST UNQUOTE FOR THE ISRAELI ACTIONS IN THE GULF, WHICH WE DO NOT CONSIDER IN LINE WITH WHAT WE WERE TOLD BY THE ISRAELIS HERE AND IN ISRAEL.

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3. DINITZ REPLIED THAT HE WOULD OF COURSE CONVEY THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE TO JERUSALEM. HE THEN SAID THAT, ACCORDING TO HIS INFORMATION, THE CAPTAIN OF THE DRILLING RIG, WHEN HE WAS FIRST INFORMED BY THE ISRAELIS THAT HE WAS 1.3 MILES EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE, REPLIED THAT THIS

WAS A MISTAKE AND THAT HE WOULD LEAVE THE AREA.

4. SUBSEQUENT TO EAGLEBURGER'S TALK WITH DINITZ, THE DEPARTMENT WAS GIVEN AN ADDITIONAL ACCOUNT OF THE AUGUST 31 EVENTS BY BOSWELL, OF THE CHICAGO AMOCO OFFICE. BOSWELL SAID AMOCO HAD FIRST RECEIVED WORD AT 1800 HOURS CAIRO TIME, AUGUST 31, THAT AN ISRAELI GUNBOAT HAD ARRIVED AT THE SITE ONE HOUR BEFORE AND HAD GIVEN AN 8-HOUR ULTIMATUM FOR THE DRILLING RIG TO LEAVE. AT THAT POINT THE CAPTAIN OF THE RIG BEGAN TO RETRIEVE HIS FOUR ANCHORS. SUBSEQUENTLY, AMOCO CLAIMS THE EGYPTIANS BLOCKED THEIR COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE SHIP BUT THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THE EGYPTIANS INSTRUCTED THE CAPTAIN OF THE RIG TO RERUN HIS ANCHORS AND TO STAY IN PLACE. THE CAPTAIN DID NOT RERUN HIS ANCHORS, BECAUSE THE ISRAELI GUNBOAT HAD INSTRUCTED THE TUGS THAT WOULD HAVE HAD TO PERFORM THIS TASK NOT TO DO SO. WHEN COMMUNICATIONS WERE RESTORED, THEREFORE, AMOCO FOUND THAT THREE OF THE FOUR ANCHORS HOLDING THE RIG HAD BEEN REMOVED. AMOCO CONSIDERED THAT THE SITUATION IN WHICH THE RIG WAS HELD BY ONLY ONE ANCHOR IN THE THEN PREVAILING WIND CONDITIONS WAS TOO DANGEROUS FOR OTHER RIGS IN THE VICINITY AND THEREFORE URGED THE EGYPTIANS TO ALLOW THE ONE REMAINING ANCHOR TO BE RAISED AND THE RIG PUT UNDER TOW.

5. AT 2400 LOCAL TIME THE ISRAELI GUNBOAT CAME BACK AND BY BULLHORN TOLD THE RIG COMMANDER THIS WAS HIS LAST CHANCE TO MOVE THE RIG. SIMULTANEOUSLY AN ISRAELI HELICOPTER APPEARED, WITH ITS SEARCHLIGHTS ON THE RIG. THE CAPTAIN OF THE RIG THEREUPON RAISED HIS REMAINING ANCHOR AND MOVED OFF.

6. THE CREW OF THE RIG AT ONE POINT OBSERVED TWO SHIPS APPROACHING, WHICH THEY ASSUMED WERE EGYPTIAN, BUT NO

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EGYPTIAN GUNBOATS ACTUALLY APPEARED IN THE NEAR VICINITY. THIS MORNING (SEPTEMBER 1), HOWEVER, THERE WERE TWO EGYPTIAN GUNBOATS IN THE AMOCO HARBOR.

7. BOSWELL CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT AMOCO WAS NOW AWAITING ASSURANCES FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD STOP THE HARASSMENT OF AMOCO OPERATIONS. THE IMPLICATION WAS CLEAR THAT AMOCO WOULD NOT WISH TO

SEND A DRILLING RIG OUT AGAIN TO THIS SITE IN THE ABSENCE
OF SUCH ASSURANCES. ROBINSON

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